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Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/47/340, A/47/375-S/24429 and A/47/391)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/47/419 and Add.1 and 2)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (A/47/340; E/1992/28)

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (A/47/312-S/24238; E/1992/28)

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (A/47/264-E/1992/71; E/1992/29)

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

1. Mr. JI Chaozhu (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development), introducing the report on the triennial policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/47/419 and Add.1 and 2), said that the 1992 comprehensive policy review was being carried out in the context of a reform process which had resulted in the adoption of General Assembly decision 46/465 on strengthening the work of the United Nations in the field of operational activities and in the open-ended consultation process established during the 1992 session of the Economic and Social Council. That process covered such areas as the promotion of economic growth, the coordination of global macroeconomic policies and institutional reforms in the governance and financing of operational activities, and was closely linked with the triennial comprehensive review of operational activities, which focused on enhancing the delivery of the system's development cooperation at the country level.

2. The current momentum for reform offered an exceptional opportunity for the achievement of more effective operational activities. Improvements at the level of institutions and processes were an essential first step in securing increased financial support and optimizing the use of available resources for the development of developing countries. As the proposed reforms were designed to benefit those developing countries which relied most heavily on United Nations operational activities, he strongly welcomed dialogue on that subject. He hoped that the reforms would help to reverse the negative trends in the provision of resources to United Nations system activities. The funding levels of virtually all the Organization's funds and programmes were hardly keeping pace with inflation and the time had come for a systematic review of the whole issue of funding, with a view to identifying positive funding strategies.

3. The current comprehensive policy review of operational activities must address not only the manner in which operational activities were carried out, but also their objectives, bearing in mind the principles of Article 55 of the

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Charter, which identified effective international cooperation for the eradication of poverty as a precondition for the establishment of peace and stability. In addition, the follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit would also have an important bearing on operational activities, while the system's increased focus on people-centred concerns and the growing interdisciplinary nature of its operational activities necessitated greater cooperation and coherence by all partners in the development process.

4. The assessment of operational activities contained in the report followed the principle, set forth in General Assembly resolution 44/211, that programme requirements at the country level should be the determining factor for the structure and composition of the United Nations system presence and that efforts should be made to enable the recipient Governments to exercise their management and coordination responsibilities and strengthen their national capacities. The report assessed numerous important initiatives launched at the country level to enhance the responsiveness and coherence of the United Nations system and demonstrated that they provided a solid basis for strengthening the resident coordinator system by expanding the application of the lead agency concept to specific programming tasks in priority areas under the overall leadership of the resident coordinator.

5. Important initiatives at the intergovernmental level included the new support cost arrangement adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The targets established by resolution 44/211 were very ambitious, however, necessitating more time and greater resources than those originally allocated for their attainment.

6. At the recent session of the Advisory Committee on Coordination (ACC) deep concern had been expressed at reductions in levels of official development assistance and at the decline in project approvals, particularly with regard to UNDP-financed projects. Those developments had grave consequences for the agencies, impairing their ability to assist developing countries through technical cooperation programmes. Recalling the provisions of paragraph 9 of resolution 44/211, ACC had appealed to Governments to ensure a continuous and predictable level of resources to enable the system to fulfil its responsibilities in support of national development efforts and stressed the need to expedite approval of UNDP projects at a level consistent with available resources and to accelerate the effective implementation of successor arrangements for agency support costs.

7. The report contained specific suggestions for further action, guided by the provisions of resolution 44/211, the new requirements of developing countries and an assessment of the interrelated areas of programming, the resident coordinator system, decentralization, capacity-building and training. In respect of programming, the proposal for a United Nations system country strategy note could be translated rapidly into effective action at the country level with strong and consistent headquarters support and based on experience already acquired in a number of countries. In addition, recent

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substantial agreements on concepts and modalities, reached both in the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Matters) and the Joint Consultative Group on Programming had assured increased application of the programme approach.

8. An effective resident coordinator system was a key factor in achieving a more coherent and cost-effective United Nations field presence, capable of providing integrated and substantive leadership in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. To that end, resident coordinators required improved access to technical capacities both within and outside the system. Additional factors included the decentralization of capacity and delegation of authority, improved access to usable information and due consideration for the specific circumstances prevailing in each country.

9. At the country level, the resident coordinator must be supported by a team of qualified staff and consultants reflecting that country's priorities; flexible mechanisms were needed for the provision of interdisciplinary advice and operational support. Efforts to streamline and strengthen operational activities wherever feasible included the establishment of common premises within the context of the Joint Consultative Group on Programming, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of United Nations system cooperation while reducing administrative costs. At the same time, national capacity-building and the effective utilization of relevant national capacity in all phases of programme and project cycles remained a key objective, necessitating the further simplification of rules and procedures.

10. He drew attention to the addenda to the report, containing recommendations in the area of science and technology, statistical data on operational activities and information on the procurement activities of the United Nations system. In conclusion, he stressed the need for a practical action plan, building on the experience and momentum achieved thus far, and pledged his support for all endeavours to achieve more coherent and cooperative action at the country level.

11. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that reform and restructuring should not be used as a smokescreen to conceal the lack of agreement among Member States on global approaches to economic and social problems. The welcome disappearance of East-West tensions had been offset by the widening of the North-South divide, manifested in such phenomena as the increased protectionism practised by developed countries at a time when developing countries were being obliged to liberalize trade, the restricted and heavily conditioned lending from multilateral banking institutions, reduced aid from donor nations and the virtual cessation of international commercial bank lending and direct foreign investment in the poorest nations. In addition, many countries were being racked by civil war or struggling with the painful processes of political and economic transition.

(Mr. Draper)

12. While the close interdependence of peace, security and development was universally recognized, and the role of the United Nations in peacemaking and peace-keeping had been considerably enhanced, its commitment to economic and social development lagged far behind. Peace could not endure in conditions of extreme proverty and, by corollary, development was impossible unless political conflicts were permanently resolved. He stressed the need, when considering the reform of the Organization, to keep in mind that developing countries could have little interest in a process which strengthened only the political side of the United Nations while allowing the tragedy of underdevelopment to persist.

13. Recognizing the multidimensional nature of the development process and the need for countries themselves to be its prime movers, the Organization was actively promoting national execution, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 44/211.

14. Among country-level, capacity-building measures, he stressed the need for the United Nations to help Governments to find culturally appropriate ways of curbing population growth and achieving ecologically sustainable development, in accordance with the principles of Agenda 21. In addition, Governments must be helped to strengthen and retain their human resource base and to identify their comparative advantages in the international marketplace, while providing social safety nets for their most vulnerable population sectors, particularly in the current conditions of economic austerity.

15. At the political and economic levels, the United Nations had an important role to play in assisting countries in their transition to democracy and free enterprise systems, while in disaster areas, relief and reconstruction efforts were necessary to pave the way for long-term development. The current reform of the United Nations aimed to institutionalize coordination at its highest levels while ensuring cost-effectiveness, thereby leading to greater synergy between the political and security-related activities of the Organization and those of relief, rehabilitation and development. To that end, a better division of labour and complementarity was being sought among the United Nations organs and agencies and between them and the Bretton Woods institutions in the areas of research, policy analysis and operations.

16. Efforts were required to reinforce the field network, ensuring that the collective knowledge and resources of the United Nations were pooled in a cost-effective manner, with an in-built early warning capability to prevent crises wherever possible. A coherent field-level approach would depend primarily on a single, integrated country strategy, a unified field office and a strengthened resident coordinator role.

17. An integrated United Nations country strategy, based on each country's development priorities and reflecting the Organization's global mandates, should be prepared by the United Nations development team under the leadership of the resident coordinator and in cooperation with the Government. The unified field office would comprise individual funds and programmes, with the

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additional participation of the specialized agencies. Such integrated country offices had already been established in six of the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. The exact composition of the country office should be flexible, expanding and contracting in accordance with the needs of individual countries, operating as a crisis management centre in times of conflict and as a development centre in times of peace. By drawing on the knowledge and experience of other organizations and bodies, the office would follow a multisectoral approach and function as a centre of excellence in human development. In the interests of streamlined administration and cost-effectiveness, the UNDP resident representative should also be the resident coordinator, heading the country office and reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

18. The primary aim of those reforms, which could be achieved with relatively minor adjustments to the existing system and by building on existing structures, must be to benefit the developing countries. At the same time, unless there were significant improvements in the system of governance and finance, with major increases in aid and a predictable flow of resources, any restructuring in the United Nations development system would amount to no more than a face-lift. Lastly, he stressed that restructuring the United Nations system for operational activities could not in itself solve the tremendous problems of the developing countries and that without freer trade, less pressure from population growth, fewer restrictions on private enterprise, an alleviation of the debt burden and well-coordinated international economic and monetary policies, its impact would be very limited.

19. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, in order to take advantage of the new opportunities that had emerged since the end of the cold war, the United Nations must introduce major reforms and strengthen its ability to operate. At the international level, it must adopt a coherent strategy and set common goals. Agenda 21, the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, and the World Summit for Children were building blocks for such common international strategies. At the same time, there was a need to create a capacity for system-wide governance that linked the analytical, normative and operational parts of the United Nations system. Such strengthened governance must be used to help restore the system's capacity to provide leadership to the entire international development community.

20. At the country level, policy objectives must be set by national Governments and supported by international policies. To implement those objectives, the United Nations system needed a country-level action plan that covered the operational activities of all United Nations agencies active in a given country. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had fully accepted the detailed UNICEF proposal for a United Nations country strategy. The strategy would develop a unified response by the United Nations system to national plans and priorities and would help to identify key areas where that system had a comparative advantage and where a unified approach could enhance effectiveness.

(Mr. Grant)

21. The new substantive opportunities at the country level must be supported by strengthened inter-agency mechanisms. The ACC agreement on the United Nations country strategy gave the resident coordinator the authority to be fully involved in all projects and programmes. Those new arrangements applied to the activities of all organizations of the United Nations system, regardless of the source of funding, and covered both operational and analytical projects. Such new arrangements required a team approach, with the resident coordinator forming subgroups devoted to specific themes and chaired by the person best suited to the task.

22. UNICEF had proposed to its partners in the Joint Consultative Group on Policy that, over the next three years, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) should increase the number of their common premises from approximately 20 countries to approximately 100. In the recent past, the Joint Consultative Group on Policy had harmonized programme cycles around the cycle of Governments in one third of the countries that it served. UNICEF was committed to achieving harmonization in two thirds of the countries by 1993, and to developing plans to address the special needs of the remaining countries.

23. One strength of UNICEF was its decentralized structure. Eighty-five per cent of UNICEF staff were at the country level, and its country representatives had the authority to take most key decisions directly with their government counterparts. Such decentralized authority was practical only because the country representative was directly accountable to the Executive Director and Executive Board for carrying out established policies. Clear lines of management responsibility and accountability served both donors and recipients and must be maintained.

24. Since the needs of children were universally considered uncontroversial, the UNICEF representative had been given exceptional mandates for advocacy and for operating in all areas, and with all parties, during times of conflict. For the same reasons, recipient Governments gave UNICEF unprecedented freedom to work within their societies, and virtually all Governments supported its fund-raising activities, which amounted to approximately $200 million a year.

25. Success in operational activities required the mobilization of high-level political support for common goals and strategies. Summit meetings, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or the World Summit for Children, were vital to the achievement of political consensus. However, political commitments would not be fulfilled if the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly were not able to play an active role in ensuring implementation and providing operational guidance.

26. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/47/264-E/1992/71) was most encouraging. Over 140 countries had prepared, or were preparing,

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national programmes of action to achieve the goals of the Summit. Many developed countries had addressed the need to increase official development assistance, and developing countries had formulated plans to mobilize and restructure their efforts in order to achieve the goals of the Summit. Those goals had been constantly reaffirmed at other international meetings that had taken place since the preparation of the Secretary-General's report.

27. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Deputy Executive Director (Programme) of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that, over the past two years, UNFPA had sought to strengthen the foundation that many developing countries had achieved in national self-reliance in the population field. In many cases, such self-reliance required more concerted efforts to institutionalize national capacity to implement population programmes. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 44/211, UNFPA had continued to implement various measures, including more analytical and strategic programming procedures that promoted a comprehensive programme approach.

28. The Programme Review and Strategy Development Exercise that UNFPA conducted together with Governments placed emphasis on an analytical approach to the development of population programmes through the assessment of programme achievements and constraints and the subsequent preparation of an integrated strategic framework for a national population programme. UNFPA's reports on such exercises had been found useful by Governments and multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations.

29. UNFPA's successor support cost arrangements were proceeding well and bringing technical support and advice closer to countries. Beginning in 1992, UNFPA had begun to establish country support teams that brought together high-level technical expertise from various sources. Eight country support teams would be functional by early 1993, and UNFPA was confident that the new mechanism would not only strengthen national capacity through the better and more timely provision of technical advice but would also help to promote complementarity of technical skills among agencies and make the best possible use of limited resources.

30. The approach of UNFPA to successor support cost arrangements was based on a holistic programme approach, decentralization and inter-agency coordination. Such arrangements strengthened the substantive technical expertise that countries received from the United Nations and its specialized agencies and introduced new elements, such as management advice, socio-cultural research and non-governmental participation.

31. UNFPA had continued to pay special attention to cooperation and coordination with all partner organizations. In particular, it had sought to improve coordination in the area of country programmes. UNFPA had also participated actively in a number of coordination mechanisms within the framework of ACC.

(Mr. Van Arendonk)

32. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy was making noteworthy progress in a number of areas, including common premises, women in development and the synchronization of country programming cycles. However, much more is needed to be done to ensure real coordination of United Nations operational activities. The Joint Consultative Group provided a useful framework that needed to be expanded and strengthened so that effective coordination became the foundation of all programmes and activities.

33. The triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system showed that, while noteworthy efforts had been and were being made by countries in the United Nations system, progress towards achieving many of the major objectives of General Assembly resolution 44/211 was still limited. Further reform was necessary, and efforts should be made to establish clear criteria by which progress or lack of progress could be measured.

34. At the country level, priority should be given to strengthening the capacity of Governments to coordinate assistance, and to facilitating coordination by all possible means, as and when Governments requested it. Coordination and cooperation among operational organizations was essential. The resident coordinator, who should represent the entire United Nations system, should receive substantive guidance from a Secretariat unit located at the highest level. Such a Secretariat function might call for the re-establishment of the Office of the Director-General. While each of the operational organizations should have their own programme directors, they should give authority to the common United Nations representative for overall coordination. The selection of the resident coordinator must be a transparent process; resident coordinators should be well-qualified managers, with proven capacity for team-building and substantive development experience.

35. Any meaningful discussion of the effectiveness of operational activities must also address the issue of resource mobilization and stability of funding. Resources for population activities in developing countries lagged far behind actual needs. To reach global targets and to give all couples who desired it access to family planning would require a doubling of annual expenditure for population programmes, from the current amount of $4.5 billion to $9 billion annually by the year 2000.

36. The International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994, would be unique in that it would combine technical, policy and operational considerations in an unprecedented manner. Under the overall theme of population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, the Conference would contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as promote awareness, mobilize resources and inspire concerted action during the decade and beyond.

37. Mr. ARORA (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP, as the main provider of relief food aid and the major supplier of food aid for development, was the largest source in the United Nations for the transfer of grant resources to developing countries. In the past two years, its annual turnover had increased by 50 per cent, with most of the growth in operations outside the regular programme, including protracted refugee and displaced persons projects, international emergency food-reserve funded operations, special emergency operations, non-food items and bilateral operations. Food aid was increasingly being integrated with national development strategies. WFP had been responsible since January 1992 for providing all the basic commodities for refugee operations and mobilizing all funds required for their transport and delivery. Beginning in 1993, responsibility for the entire in-country movements of food for refugees would be transferred from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to WFP.

38. Never before in the history of WFP had there been so many major emergencies occurring simultaneously, arising both from war and civil strife, and from drought and sudden natural disasters. The focus of the Programme's work was consequently shifting from development to relief, which had accounted for almost half of WFP food shipments in 1991. WFP also provided indispensable logistical support to complex relief operations such as the response to the drought emergency in southern Africa or the airlift operations in Somalia. The burgeoning need for relief food aid had posed exceptional challenges for the organization and its staff. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/22, the membership of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes had been expanded to 42 members, with increased representation for developing countries. It currently exercised full intergovernmental supervision and direction for all aspects of the Programme, which now had its own financial regulations. The WFP Executive Director was now accountable to the Committee for all aspects of the Programme. He appealed for support to achieve the targets of US$ 1.5 billion for the forthcoming pledging conference for the 1993-1994 biennium.

39. Mr. ZAMAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the Secretary-General's report on the triennial comprehensive policy review (A/47/419) had noted the lack of progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. The composite nature of the United Nations system encouraged competition rather than collaboration between its various organizations, and contradictory signals had been given. He therefore hoped that clear and operationally implementable guidance would be offered during the current triennial policy review exercise in order to eliminate a number of structural obstacles which diminished the impact of the funds received from the United Nations system in the developing countries.

40. The use of microprojects as the main modality for transferring technical knowledge had proved to be wasteful and had resulted in scattered initiatives, as well as unrelated and sometimes competing schemes. Termination of a project had usually been looked on as the final achievement of a major development objective instead of a beginning or a step in a long-term

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process. The project approach dealt with problems in isolation from other related factors and issues, which only a sector or subsector strategy could comprehensively reflect. The first stage of analysis should be a coherent government strategy which had projects as its final end products. The Group of 77 had therefore recommended a shift to the programme approach. With projects identified as components of a well-defined national strategy, it would be easy to measure the impact of a given project on the overall development of a country. In that way, only those activities which were really needed by the country would be funded and development would become more sustainable.

41. National execution should become the norm rather than the exception. The support cost system had become the single largest obstacle to capacity-building in developing countries by giving agencies a self-serving interest in grant funds. In that connection, he recalled the 1975 guidelines on new dimensions in technical cooperation which had encouraged a shift from the old concept whereby Governments provided counterpart funds to projects, to a system in which the United Nations assisted government programmes by making counterpart contributions. While use of that modality had increased somewhat, it was clear that incentives in the system did not allow it to become more widespread. A national strategy framework would allow recipient Governments to use each source of external assistance according to its comparative advantage. However, a number of structural changes needed to take place before developing countries were able to use the United Nations system according to its comparative advantage, and before the United Nations could deliver assistance within a programme approach framework. Resolution 44/211 had specifically highlighted changes required in programming, decentralization, rules and procedures and the need to develop more innovative execution modalities, as well as to rationalize field office structures through the establishment of multisectoral teams under the authority of the resident coordinator. Reports indicated that no significant changes had taken place in any of those areas since the adoption of the resolution, despite a three-year target. Those changes should be implemented immediately as part of an integrated package.

42. Some agencies had recently taken some steps in the direction of decentralization, but it was important for all United Nations funding agency representatives to have the same level of authority to take decisions at the country level, including the authority for programme development, cancelling, modifying and adding activities within the agreed overall programme goals, as well as shifting resources without reference to headquarters. Central authority was critical for integrated programme management and for the necessary flexibility to monitor and readjust activities as circumstances required. Headquarters should approve the overall programme rather than revisions of its components. It was important to understand that national strategies were necessarily multisectoral in nature, with funding from United Nations, bilateral and multilateral sources. In such cases, delays in the approval processes of one source would affect the coherent and coordinated

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implementation of related components. His delegation was of the view that such decentralization would enhance accountability of resources. The shift to a programme approach should be accompanied by strategy evaluations rather than project evaluations, with stress being laid on programme impact rather than mere project delivery.

43. Regarding execution, the programme approach required integrated formulation, design, management and implementation. Programme management teams or task forces should be established and drawn from national institutions and multiple funding sources in order to ensure that execution was not shared between several United Nations agencies and sectoral ministries, but implemented and managed in a coordinated manner. The funding agency should be able to assist Governments in assembling multidisciplinary teams which had the best and most relevant expertise, and included national officials involved in management and implementation. It was also essential to harmonize and simplify formats for formulation, evaluation and monitoring. Current formats were designed for self-contained projects; they needed to be adjusted to take into account the programme approach in which the design of each component was interrelated with other multiple components.

44. The programme approach also required pools of technical expertise based in the field offices of funding agencies at the country level to assist Governments in programme development, constant monitoring and technical backstopping. The composition of staff in each funding agency should reflect the substantive and technical advisory needs of the country rather than the institutional structure of the United Nations system. Such pools should be managed by the resident coordinators in a multi-disciplinary manner in order to assist Governments in making cross-sectoral linkages among the strategies funded by the United Nations system. The pools should advise resident coordinators, funding agency representatives and national project managers. They should also provide advice, on request, to Governments regarding policy, strategy development, appraisal, implementation and monitoring. The assistance provided by the United Nations funding agencies to the Government, at its request, should be contained in a single United Nations system country programme document. He hoped that consensus could be reached on a resolution which ensured the most cost-effective and efficient use of resources and the coordinated implementation of programmes in accordance with the priorities determined by developing countries.

45. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said there was broad agreement that the United Nations system needed to be revitalized to meet the changing circumstances of the 1990s and beyond. Such revitalization was already under way with regard to the Economic and Social Council and its complementarity with the General Assembly, follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the United Nations development system. Governance and financing of that system would be dealt with in the context of the Economic and Social Council and not in the context of the triennial policy review. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of

(Mr. Barnett, United Kingdom)

that review, which could and should make a serious contribution to improving the effectiveness of United Nations operational activities, notably at the field level. The European Community and its member States subscribed to the recommendations of the Secretary-General's triennial policy review report (A/47/419) regarding the need for strengthened coordination, a common country strategy and the importance of human development, to which the United Nations should give greater priority. The concept of human development offered a renewed basis for integrating sectoral inputs around common goals and strategies in support of national policies. It appeared that not all United Nations organizations fully shared the commitment to achieving the goals of resolution 44/211. The resolution was complex and subject to differences of interpretation. A major concern was the absence of a clear overall concept of how to improve the system.

46. Regarding the field structure of United Nations operational activities, the European Community and its member States agreed with the report that there was a need to strengthen the resident coordinator system, taking into account the specific circumstances of individual countries. The responsibilities of resident coordinators would need to embrace the coordination of operational activities, humanitarian affairs and other, non-development-related United Nations matters. The European Community and its member States agreed that there was a need to broaden the pool of qualified people from whom resident coordinators were selected, and concurred that coordinating bodies such as the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy should provide clearer guidance on the role and responsibilities of resident coordinators. They welcomed the fact that the Joint Consultative Group on Policy subgroup on common premises had been asked to prepare a plan for a significant increase in such premises in the coming two or three years. Resident coordinators should be persons of proven ability, and nationality should not play a part in their selection. They must be able to retain the confidence of all the representatives of the United Nations and other donors, and must be given the authority to formulate the response of the United Nations as a whole to recipient countries' national priorities. Lastly, they must be able to question and, if necessary, insist on the amendment of country programmes of individual funds and agencies if they were not properly integrated into other development activities. The roles and workload of the resident coordinator would vary considerably from country to country. However, any solution must include: a wider pool of, and purer criteria for, recruitment; broader-based funding from within the United Nations system for resident cordinators within existing resources; provision of the degree of independence necessary for them to carry out their functions; a more integrated and unified United Nations system approach at the field level, combined with greater commitment by individual agencies to coordination; greater responsbility of the resident coordinator for the planning and coordination of programmes; better coordination within individual agencies; and improved coordination at the Headquarters level, drawing upon the authoritiy of the Secretary-General and with strong backup from bodies such as ACC and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy.

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47. He reiterated the belief of the European Community and its member States that the Department of Economic and Social Development could not adequately perform both coordination functions and operational activities.

48. With respect to programming, the European Community and its member States welcomed in particular the adoption of a United Nations system common country strategy, which should provide for a more concerted and coherent approach. Such strategies should be based on a sensible division of labour within and between the funding bodies and the specialized agencies. The approach, which required corresponding commitments from Governments, should be implemented immediately in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and it was regrettable that there had been no progress to date on implementing the resolution on the subject adopted in the Economic and Social Council.

49. The adoption of the programme approach was an essential accompaniment to the integrated United Nations response. Full account must be taken of the circumstances of individual countries. The success of the approach required a genuinely shared understanding of its importance and greatly improved measures of goals and objectives, as well as the introduction of effective monitoring, evaluation and audit mechanisms.

50. As to national execution, it was UNDP's role to help develop national capacity to undertake programme and project management and execution. The European Community and its member States would welcome confirmation that the efforts of the United Nations resulted each year in an increasing role for national authorities and other entities, although they realized that many factors affected development.

51. The new support cost arrangements would foster the development of such capacity once they were fully operational, and UNDP should ensure their early implementation. The process would be further facilitated through the simplification and improved harmonization of United Nations procedures, leading to a common manual of regulations for all United Nations agencies and the strengthening of upstream functions such as policy advice.

52. Monitoring and evaluation were also of central importance and could not be left to national Governments alone. The record of the United Nations system in adapting its functioning to facilitate national execution thus far had been lamentable, and it was disappointing that the report contained no specific proposals to improve the situation. However, it was encouraging that some progress had been made in harmonizing United Nations budget cycles with those of recipient countries, and it would be interesting to learn why some agencies had found that easier to achieve than others.

53. The European Community and its member States broadly endorsed the report's conclusions concerning decentralization, but would have liked to see detailed accounts from all relevant United Nations bodies indicating the extent of their devolution of authority and concrete proposals for further

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decentralization. It was particularly important that they devolve broadly similar approval authorities to the field. Proposals were needed for the transfer of appropriate authority to the resident representative from those funds and agencies without extensive field representation. Effective arrangements for ensuring greatly enhanced accountability also must be established as a matter of urgency.

54. The European Community and its member States welcomed the progress made in improving training in national execution, although major constraints to successful capacity-building remained. It was time to generate innovative approaches permitting national institutional expertise to be established and safeguarded, irrespective of the movement of individual personnel.

55. Some of the disappointment at the incomplete implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which was perhaps too long, stemmed from an apparent lack of commitment in parts of the system. It was to be hoped that delegations would now resist the temptation to push individual concerns and concentrate instead on a small number of key areas of concern to all. The resolution to be adopted on the item at the current session should set achievable objectives which could be realized within a meaningful time-frame and should acknowledge that they could be achieved only with the support of both donors and recipients. The establishment of an international development segment of the Economic and Social Council to provide high-level policy guidance could also facilitate the task of monitoring, and providing stronger and more coordinated guidance to, the United Nations system.

56. The resolution on the triennial policy review should focus on ways to ensure a more integrated and unified field structure, including targets for the establishment of more common premises and a strengthened resident coordinator system along the lines he had indicated earlier. The resolution should promote the shift to the programme approach by requesting the agencies, in consultation with recipient Governments, to reach an early agreement on, inter alia, a common understanding of the main elements of the approach and how it should be implemented, the more effective provision of relevant support and technical assistance and common means of evaluation. The resolution should also introduce a single country programme document in a number of countries as a first step, and should seek to ensure that the system adapted to the changing role which would result from the move to national execution by placing greater emphasis on the provision of technical and policy support, more effective monitoring and evaluation and an integrated and practical approach to national capacity-building. The text should call for increasing decentralization of responsibility to the field, particularly in respect of project and programme approval and amendment, on the basis of clear programmes and stronger accountability; and, lastly, it should seek to improve the quantity and quality of training for United Nations staff and nationals using innovative methods at headquarters and in the field in such areas as the programme approach, national execution, support costs and the single country programme. The resolution should take fully into account the other reform exercises under way and should offer clear guidance on how to enhance the delivery of assistance.

57. Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Canada and Australia as well as his own, said that efforts made thus far to strengthen the resident coordinator system had not had much of an impact on substantive programming issues. Accordingly, it was necessary, first, to define the selection process for and the role and responsibilities of the resident coordinator; secondly, to create a United Nations integrated country committee as the central coordinating body of the Organization in each recipient country; and, thirdly, to ensure that the common country strategy served as a major instrument for effecting coordination in the field. The individual programmes developed by each agency with the host Government would provide the foundation for the strategy.

58. All countries receiving significant levels of United Nations development assistance should have a resident coordinator, who should be appointed by the Secretary-General on the advice of a restructured development secretariat. The resident coordinator should have the responsibility for developing, implementing and enforcing a coherent, system-wide response to the needs of the country, making full use of the comparative advantages of each organization of the United Nations family. The Secretary-General should select the most suitable leader from among United Nations agencies operating within a country, taking full account of the country's expressed needs and circumstances. The resident coordinator system should be financed from the existing resources of the agencies working in the country concerned.

59. The integrated country committee, which should be chaired by the resident coordinator and comprise representatives of all the relevant United Nations development organizations and agencies, would have as its major responsibility the production of a common country strategy which would assess the country's major development requirements, issues and constraints and outline the strategic directions the United Nations system should follow in addressing those questions. The committee would ensure that the country programmes of the various agencies were consistent with the integrated country strategy. The integrated country committee should also review and make recommendations on all projects and programmes to be approved in the field and to be submitted to headquarters for approval, and should review agency sector strategies, evaluations and audits. Various committee members could also serve as chairpersons of teams investigating issues such as poverty reduction and AIDS that required a highly coordinated inter-agency response.

60. It was also necessary to decentralize the United Nations development system's activites to enhance the quality of performance at the field level. While increased delegation of authority must be accompanied by appropriate accountability measures, once unified United Nations field structures were in place, decisions taken at the field level by personnel fully familiar with local circumstances invariably would result in more effective and efficient results than decisions taken at centralized locations in industrialized countries.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

61. Improved performance in the field was critically linked to effective governance and United Nations Secretariat support. The delegations on whose behalf he was speaking strongly supported the integration into the Economic and Social Council of the functions of the proposed international development council. The Economic and Social Council should provide policy guidance to UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. The Administrative Committee on Coordination and the specialized agencies should be brought within the framework of Council decisions. A clear division of labour must be established between the Council and the governing bodies of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. The Economic and Social Council should concentrate on policy direction and coordination and play a major role in the assessment of the United Nations development system and its constituent institutions. Consideration should be given to whether responsibility for reviewing and approving common country strategies should be assigned to the Council. The governing bodies of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP should be given more focused mandates to concentrate on operational activities and ensure that their organizations adhered to Council policies. Their primary concern should be the formulation and implementation of high-quality programmes focusing particularly on human development and capacity-building. They should also consider and review reports on programmes and project evaluations and mid-term reviews of country programmes.

62. A restructured development secretariat with expertise in management planning and processes was essential to ensure that the Council's decisions were actually implemented and inter-agency coordination was truly achieved. The secretariat should have the research and analytical skills needed to facilitate its support for the Council's evaluation responsibilities.

63. While General Assembly resolution 44/211 continued to provide a solid basis for the reform of the development process, it was necessary continually to review and update the approach to its implementation. In particular, account must be taken of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the new partnership forged at the Eighth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The evolving role of the United Nations system in development must be factored into the current policy review. Developing countries must continue to have access to the technical capacity of the United Nations system, and the United Nations funding agencies would play an increasing role in policy support, programming and monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations should increase its role in national programme formulation at the request of recipient Governments and in accordance with capacity-building objectives by assisting in articulating such programmes. Collaborative programming by donors, international financial institutions and the United Nations system was particularly critical in smaller developing countries with limited capacity to coordinate external assistance. The programme approach should be accelerated, and recipient countries should be helped to apply the concept.

64. Monitoring and evaluation should focus on determining whether funded activities contributed to country programme objectives and the broader

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

sustainable development goals of the host Government. Development impact and sustainability should be the acid tests. The delegations on whose behalf he was speaking agreed that revised guidelines for monitoring and evaluation might usefully be devised, and they encouraged the development agencies to cooperate in establishing a uniform format for reporting the success rate of projects. The reporting system could be modelled on that currently operating in the development banks.

65. Much remained to be accomplished with respect to national capacity-building. International institutions must adopt a more coordinated and sustained approach that emphasized building human skills and strengthening national policies and institutions. Current procedures could be harmonized and simplified. The other proposals in the Secretary-General's report also merited consideration.

66. Mr. NIE Huahang (China) stressed the importance of a favourable external economic environment for world peace and for the development of the developing countries. While his delegation welcomed the fact that a number of developed countries had met or surpassed the target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product in the form of official development assistance, the overall flow of official development aid had remained far below that level. It was to be hoped that the international community and the major developed countries in particular would increase their contributions for operational activities for development.

67. Rather than request all developing countries to adopt a single modality, the United Nations development agencies should fully respect the sovereignty of recipient countries when assisting them, at their request, in setting priorities for collaboration in the formulation of national development plans, and should refrain from getting involved in matters which should be dealt with by Governments themselves.

68. With regard to the programme approach, the lack of a precise definition of the term and the conceptual differences among the agencies and between their headquarters and field offices had adversely affected programming activities and had caused delays in programme and project approval procedures. Flexibility was essential, for the programme or project approach should be adopted only if it would facilitate the execution of country programmes. Arbitrary arrangements should be avoided.

69. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations operational activities system with respect to national execution, personnel training and capacity-building. In certain agencies, various obstacles still resulted in the unsatisfactory implementation of resolutions. The agencies concerned should examine their approaches to implementing resolutions and focus their technical cooperation activities on promoting and strengthening national execution and national capacity-building. At the same time, national execution must not end up as field office execution by the agencies themselves.

(Mr. Nie Huahang, China)

70. Coordination at the country level should above all be the responsibility of the recipient countries. The process of strengthening the resident coordinator system should focus on coordination within the framework of operational activities in order to maximize input. The initial effort should be to coordinate and harmonize the programming cycles of all relevant agencies as far as possible, followed by the simplification and unification of procedures in order to enhance efficiency.

71. The decentralization efforts undertaken thus far still fell short of requirements. Field offices should be responsible for the arrangements for, and implementation of, approved country programmes and should have the authority to approve projects under those programmes, whereas the agency headquarters should primarily be in charge of approving programmes and coordinating operational policies.

72. His delegation hoped that in the coming few years General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 46/219 would continue to be effectively and fully implemented.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.